

Oral Questions

Mr. Trudeau: Yes, Madam Speaker, I would be very interested in having a resolution which all parties in this House could support and which would bring us somewhat closer to the moment when we could have a truly Canadian constitution satisfying all parts of the country.

I am not in a position yet, not having met the premiers, to say whether this should be in the form of a resolution or any other form of motion or debate. I have taken, as a position, that before meeting the premiers—I told the leaders of the opposition parties this yesterday—I would not want to solidify my position in any direction because I want to hear their views. But certainly I would hope that anything which is discussed on Monday with the premiers would not preclude—on the contrary—that we could come to the House of Commons for some, hopefully, universal support for a course to be determined.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, I wonder if the Prime Minister would indicate his agreement with my view that, barring some extraordinary position of the premiers, it would be useful for this Parliament to have the opportunity to debate those questions before we rise for the summer recess.

● (1420)

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, at the present time that is my view. Subject to anything which might arise in the meeting with the premiers, and subject to the views of the Leader of the New Democratic Party, I would hope that before we recess for the summer we can debate this matter. I would go further and hope that we can take some action, but of course that will depend on what the premiers are prepared to consider and to say on Monday.

As far as we on this side are concerned, we see the matter as a very urgent one and we would like to see more than debate; we would like to arrive at a resolution of at least some of the constitutional matters.

FIRST MINISTERS' MEETING—PROPOSALS FROM PROVINCES

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Madam Speaker, I direct my question to the right hon. Prime Minister. Has the Prime Minister received any specific proposals from the provinces in preparation for the June 9 first ministers' meeting? Has he, on behalf of the federal government, given specific proposals to the province, or has the communication to date been primarily concentrated in the letters which were exchanged between the Prime Minister and the premiers?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, neither the Minister of Justice nor myself have received any concrete proposals from the provinces beyond the verbal exchanges which took place when the Minister of Justice met with them. I have had no further communications from the provinces beyond the letter which was tabled in the House.

Mr. Epp: Madam Speaker, in view of the interest across the country and, of course, resident here in the House on partici-

pation in constitutional talks, could the Prime Minister indicate whether after the meeting of June 9 he would be willing to make a report to the House, either of motions or by whatever mechanism he finds suitable, to report on the progress of that meeting, rather than having to rely on eliciting the information only through question period?

Mr. Trudeau: Madam Speaker, I would be happy to make a statement on motions on the results of the June 9 meeting, shall we say in the several days following that meeting. Of course, if it appears that the kind of debate referred to by the Leader of the Opposition is to come reasonably soon after June 9, it might be convenient to wait for that debate before I make any statement. Assuming we are given a couple of days to decide on that latter matter, if it appears that debate is not reasonably imminent then I will be happy to make a statement on motions.

FEDERAL POSITION ON CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE—DATE FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF NEW CONSTITUTION

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Prime Minister. According to the chairman of the Quebec caucus of the Liberal party, as he is quoted in today's press, Quebec MPs of the Liberal party plan to spend the summer—to use his words—“to sell” the federal position on constitutional change.

Considering that the only position the Prime Minister has taken so far which seems to be eminently sensible, going into a meeting of the first ministers, is a commitment to a charter of rights, would the Prime Minister tell the House if anything other than persuading Quebecers as to the desirability of a charter of rights lies behind that statement by the chairman of the caucus, or is something else intended?

Right Hon. P. E. Trudeau (Prime Minister): Madam Speaker, I attended part of that caucus meeting yesterday. There are several subjects on which the caucus would like to see the Canadian Constitution improved and federalism renewed. The hon. member mentions a charter of fundamental rights. The caucus seemed very interested, also, in entrenching linguistic rights. These were opinions which were expressed: there was no resolution, to my knowledge, of the caucus.

The significance of the whole debate, as far as I was able to perceive it, is that our Quebec members, having participated very valiantly in the recent referendum in Quebec, are anxious to see that this government and this Parliament live up to the undertaking which we all made in our province, that there would be renewed federalism and that it would come quickly.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

● (1425)

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, following the conversation that I had with the Prime Minister yesterday on this particular matter of constitutional change, I should like to ask if he is prepared at least to indicate the desirability—keeping in mind that he has to obtain agreement from the premiers when they